



Affirmation

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR:
UNITED METHODISTS FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND QUEER CONCERNS
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Affirmation Welcomes a New Co-Spokesperson

The Affirmation Council is proud to announce our new Co-Spokesperson is Diane DeLap from Wilmington, MA, north of Boston. We are glad to have her taking on this critical role as we prepare for GC 2008 in Fort Worth.

She joins Ken Rowe of San Francisco, our other Co-Spokesperson, in this important work. She is the first transgender person to have the Co-Spokesperson role in Affirmation.

Diane brings a lot of life experience to this role. She grew up in Waltham, MA and lived in Ohio for several years, where she met Jan, her partner of 42 years. She has a BA in Ministry, and in 1973 was ordained as a Minister in a conservative Christian church group. In 1990, after disclosing her gender identity struggles to her local church board, she was forced to leave the church. Following a move back to Massachusetts in 1983, she became active

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A Weekend of Retreat and Renewal

By Marcia Chadly

Top 10 Reasons that Affirmation's 2006 retreat was the perfect way to spend Labor Day weekend.

- #10 Diverse, wonderful folks with at least one person from each of the five United Methodist Jurisdictions—including the clergy with the most body art, one of the celebrants of a historic United Methodist holy union, a couple on their honeymoon, and "Honey Bunny".
- #9 Celebrations of reunion with old friends.
- #8 Warm, caring inclusion of those new to the group.
- #7 A community where being a United Methodist and a LGBT is the "center" rather than the "edge"—comfort and acceptance.
- #6 Thought provoking discussions of dis-ease, showing the deep interrelatedness of person and world.
- #5 How many other groups would understand ranting and raving to be moving toward healing?

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Affirmation Welcomes a New Co-Spokesperson (Continued from page 1)
in local transgender support groups, was part of the founding board of the Tiffany Club of New England, and was active in the International Foundation for Gender Education.

She began transition to live as a female in the late 1990's, and started attending a Welcoming church aligned with both the United Methodist and United Church of Christ denominations where she is now alternate representative to the New England Conference of the UMC. She has also been active with Church Within a Church and Cambridge Welcoming Ministries. Diane was elected as a National Council member of Affirmation in April 2003 as the first transgender member. She and Jan act as co-editors of the Affirmation Newsletter. Diane is also active in the New England Chapter of MFSM as editor of their newsletter, and has been a member of the Board of Directors of Greater Boston PFLAG since September 2003. Diane is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts with a BS in Information Systems. She is the parent of a grown son and grandparent of Sam (5) and Katherine (2), and is currently working as an IT Specialist in a Department of the Massachusetts government, and living in Wilmington with Jan and their two cats.

We are very pleased to have Diane in this leadership position.

Faces of Affirmation

By Nancy Giese

This past summer I had the privilege of being the face of Affirmation and the voice of LGBT people in the UM church when I was the program leader for a grandparent/grand child camp with the UM camping program. I lead the group on the theme of DIVE IN: Diversity (DIVE) and Inclusiveness (IN) in Families. While all kinds of families were discussed, a primary focus was on introducing LGBT families into the mix. These families are in our churches and in our neighborhoods. Through videos,

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Affirmation Newsletter

This Affirmation newsletter is a quarterly publication.

Only Affirmation's elected spokespersons may represent the official positions of this organization. Opinions here, signed or unsigned, are those of the writers, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Affirmation.

Articles for consideration for publication may be submitted to: AffirmationNewsletter@yahoo.com* All articles in this publication remain the property of Affirmation, and may be used only with written permission of Affirmation.

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Jan DeLap & Diane DeLap

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Mission Statement

As an independent voice of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer people, Affirmation radically reclaims the compassionate and transforming gospel of Jesus Christ by relentlessly pursuing full inclusion in the Church as we journey with the Spirit in creating God's beloved community.

Adopted January 2005

* **Note:** substitute the symbol "@" for the letters "at" in the email addresses.

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*** Note: substitute the symbol "@" for the letters "_at_" in the email addresses above.**

Introducing A New Council Member

Greetings, I'm Tim Tennant-Jayne. I'm a new member of the Affirmation Council, although I've been apart of Affirmation for a while. I helped with the Advisory Council that morphed into the Reconciling Ministries Network's Board of Directors. Most recently, I helped develop Affirmation's Strategic Vision Long-Range Task Force. I'm also a gay man. I am in a long-term relationship of 20 years with HIV.

In addition, I am an ordained elder in the Iowa Conference, currently on Administrative Location. They can't seem to find place to appoint me. Since the church can't find a place for me, I began Legends Street Ministry over 10 years ago. This endeavor takes me into local gay bars to listen to people's stories, and offer pastoral care and advice. I offer patrons the message of Christian love and God's acceptance. This work consists of talking with individuals, listening to their stories, and helping them recognize their personal value. While unusual, it follows in the tradition of Jesus' ministry among the outsiders of society, and John Wesley's support of young Tommy Blair, who had been charged with 'sodomitical practices.'

The mission statement of Legends Street Ministry is that "all people are unique individuals of special worth. I will value each person for who they are, and will seek to develop healthy and caring relationships with those whom I meet that enable both of us to reach a greater understanding of ourselves and others."

Unfortunately, this ministry of my heart doesn't necessarily pay the bills. Currently I am doing office work to make ends meet. Also in fulfillment of a life-long dream, I am working on a Doctor of Ministry degree at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, MN. It is becoming a study in Queer spirituality.

Another detail: with ink work representing the ancient elements of earth, fire, wind, and water, I've claimed the title of "Most Tattooed United Methodist Clergy person."

Mark these dates on your calendar:

MFSa Voices of Faith; Washington, DC; Apr. 13-15, 2007

RMN Convocation; Nashville, TN; Aug. 2-5 2007

UMC General Conference 2008; Ft. Worth, TX; Apr. 23-May 2, 2008

Five Leave the Affirmation Council

By Jim Palmquist

As time goes on, people complete their commitment to serve on the Affirmation Council, or find that their personal lives take them away from our work. Five more have left us over the past year or so.

Peggy Gaylord was a very valuable contributor to the Council. She had served on the Council many years ago, served on the RCP Board, and then came back for a second tour with the Affirmation Council. While with us this time, she took the Female Co-Spokesperson's role, and brought us great new energy and direction. She led the GC 2004 Affirmation presence with her Male Co-Spokesperson, Ken Rowe. She wrote extensively for the newsletter, and attended all three trial/appeals in support of Beth Stroud. She helped plan and lead some of our program events. She emphasized spirituality in our work. As part of Nominations and Leadership Development, she recruited new Council members from non-traditional sources including our first transgender Council recruit.

Kathryn Mitchem also leaves us. Kathryn has co-led our Nominations and Leadership Development Committee, and spent the last couple of years as Co-Coordinator, one of the two executive positions in our bylaws. She also helped lead program work, and got our Retreat Program running again. Her ability to facilitate is legendary. Her ability to lead a group through a process to achieve jointly -shared objectives is stellar. Her insight to group dynamics is excellent and behind the scenes, she has been in contact with many people on a frequent basis, serving the organization and often meeting others' personal needs. When we were stuck, we could count on Kathryn to move us forward. And her invocations came from the depths of her deep religious faith. She recently went to Korea to see old friends.

John Calhoun is also leaving the Council. John has been our Financial Manager for many years, managing finances, the recent budget process improvements, bank management, and on the Fund Development committee. John was also our corporation guru, keeping us in compliance with our bylaws and articles of incorporation through annual meetings and filings with the state. Since John came out of our chapter organization, he worked on Membership and chapter formation and Nominations and Leadership Development while with the Council. He also did a lot of ecumenical work with the United Church of Canada, and took on roles like speaking for us at the GCCUIC Task Force on Homosexuality and the Unity of The United Methodist Church in 2002. Often John's experiences gave him insights to issues that others did not have, and we appreciated John's perspectives as important learnings for us. And we are thankful that he will continue to manage our banking.

Rusty Norment, our very capable treasurer, has completed his term on the Council. At 78 years old, he prefers to stay closer to home and enjoy life more. Many of us know that he is one of the oldest bungee jumpers at one of the world's biggest bungee jumping courses in Australia a couple of years ago, so he has courage. After leaving the Council, he developed a serious cancer, which

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Five Leave the Affirmation Council (Continued from page 4)

after treatment, has completely disappeared. This is a marvel for his medical team. His spirits are good, and he still works part time at Ukrops. Jan Olson has replaced Rusty as treasurer. She was on the Council several years ago, and you will hear more about her in a future newsletter.

Vivian Waltz left the Council as she moved to upstate New York with her children. Vivian helped create the very important strategic vision document, and chaired the Communications Committee. She has a wonderful way with writing and editing, and added a lot to our press releases and other printed work. She conducted some of our worship events while with the Council. She assisted the Female Spokesperson at events, such as the three events involving the trial of Beth Stroud. When she left the Council, she was exploring taking a congregational assignment as pastor, and we hope that happens. She has a lot to offer a congregation.

But others have been recruited, assigned new tasks, and we move forward. We are thankful for these pillars of our movement who have moved on. We are building the replacement pillars right now that will carry us into the future.

Beware Rhetoric

By Diane DeLap

Recently our adult class in church has been discussing Anne Robertson's book *Blowing the Lid Off the God-Box*. It's an excellent book if you haven't read it. Last week we were discussing the chapter "Who is on the Lord's Side?" where she discusses the conservative and liberal polarization of the Church. As one who was a fundamentalist pastor for several years, and now am active in a more liberal UMC church, I'm familiar with many of the contrasts she mentions in the chapter.

What I am concerned about, however, is the level of rhetoric that I hear coming from both sides. One of the things that began my disillusionment with fundamentalism was the level of the "un-Christian" rhetoric I heard from others in the church. It was distressing to hear people I had come to respect talk using derogatory and offensive language about those who held opposing viewpoints. Where was the love for neighbors that Christ talked about? The impatience and opposition to those who disagreed with them belied their stated love of others. It seemed to me that they were willing to love others as long as they agreed with their views. If others didn't agree with them, all bets were off and any means, including character assassination, could be used to bring them in to line. Unfortunately, it seemed like the church was acting very much like a secular organization.

When I became a member of the United Methodist Church, it was because I found a welcoming congregation. I knew that there were elements of the denomination that opposed inclusiveness, but I was overjoyed to meet a number of people who were willing to sacrifice and struggle for welcome for all Christians. However, I have been concerned in recent months about the level

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Beware Rhetoric *(Continued from page 5)*

of rhetoric I've been hearing from my more liberal friends. Particularly in matters of politics and the war, some of the rhetoric sounds disturbingly familiar.

I mentioned in our class my concern that some of my friends had been crossing the boundary in declaring unequivocally that "Bush lied." One member of the class noted that she was convinced that our President had lied about the reasons for the war. I replied that I had no way of knowing what was in the President's mind. It's presumptive of me to make a moral judgment of the motivation of another. Only God knows what was in our President's mind when he made those decisions, and only God can determine if he was lying. It's not our right to make those judgments. When those of us on the left descend into judgmental rhetoric, we commit the same error the right does when it declares that those who disagree with them are less Christian than they are. It's important that we listen to our own rhetoric. Are our arguments presenting a reasoned viewpoint, or are we relying on emotional statements based on our opinions? When we place personal interpretation above our love for our neighbor, we violate Jesus' second great commandment - regardless of which side of the ideological street we are on.

A Weekend of Retreat and Renewal *(Continued from page 1)*

And finally, what would any United Methodist gathering be without the familiar four?

- #4 Tradition—Worship, full of singing—new hymns, favorite songs, hymns that used to be in the hymnal, and the Hokey Pokey.
- #3 Scripture—We dusted off some Bible verses—"even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs" We were very well fed.
- #2 Reason—Coming to understand the connection to self as the integration of body, psyche, and relationships with no linearity or clear split between them.

And number one —the reason I would go back in a heart beat...

- #1 Experience—of life affirming laughter, soul felt hugs, and connection. What a marvelous experience the weekend was!

Faces of Affirmation *(Continued from page 2)*

stories, activities, and crafts we discovered God's wonderful diversity within families. We learned about how God wants us to treat other families with love and not hatred or bullying. We celebrated families of all kinds in a loving church environment. For the first time, people spoke of LGBT persons in their families or friends in a church setting. It was a powerful witness of God's love for all people and all families.

If you, your church, or group would be interested in sponsoring a program, workshop, speaker, or retreat around the theme of Diversity and family, please contact, Nancy Giese, council co-coordinator. Reconciling congregations or those considering becoming Reconciling would benefit from this non threatening program geared toward meeting real LGBT families both in person and through the videos and stories shared. Training for church leaders and church schoolteachers is also available. Specialized programs can be geared to your specific needs.

Jesus, The Bible and Homosexuality—A Review

By Rob Gamble

Jack Rogers' *Jesus, The Bible and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church* (Westminster John Knox Press © 2006) can help reframe the debate about homosexuality within our churches and society.

Rogers shifts the scripture argument from particular interpretation—debating the six verses taken out of context—to ask: What does the Holy Spirit speak through the whole body of scripture? What did Christ Jesus do and command? Is the Holy Spirit leading the church to greater or lesser inclusiveness?

Chapter 4, "Interpreting the Bible in Times of Controversy," turns to the Reformed and Presbyterian creeds and confessions to demonstrate that the history of the creeds has been to expand the inclusiveness of the church. The one anomaly is the recent prohibition concerning faithful GLBT members. Reading back through the earlier creeds and confessions, Rogers finds no basis for denying full rights, ordination as deacons, elders, and ministers of Word and Sacrament for faithful GLBT members or same-sex marriage.

Rogers uses his Presbyterian heritage as a model, and urges other traditions to use their own heritage. Taking his suggestion, *The Book of Discipline* section on Doctrinal Standards reads, "Many distinctively Protestant teachings were transmitted into United Methodist understandings through doctrinal formulations such as the Articles of Religion of the Church of England and the Heidelberg Catechism of the Reformed tradition." (p. 42) Would it be possible to take those, the writings of John Wesley, the General Rules of Our United Societies, The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church, The Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, and the history of changes in *The Book of Discipline* that included former slaves, abolition of the US Central Conference, rights and ordination of women, inclusion of divorced who remarried to demonstrate that the exclusion of faithful GLBT men and women runs counter to the inclusive movement of the Holy Spirit and is, therefore, not Wesleyan in practice?

Chapter 6, "Real People Real Marriage," includes brief sections on Clergy Sexual Misconduct, the Evolution of the Purpose of Marriage, Male Gender Superiority and Opposition to Same-Sex Marriage, Opposition to Science, and others that are helpful to understanding the American debate.

In Chapter 7 (pps. 120, 122-3) there is a fascinating outline of the views of chastity, which if we are honest, means that no one qualifies. Chastity is not just for the single, but also includes the married.

Jack Rogers is an Evangelical, was Moderator of the 213th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), taught at Fuller Theological Seminary, and San Francisco Theological Seminary. He is a scholar who wrote a clear and concise book (126 pages plus 29 pages of notes) that was informative as he presented his argument.

Reviewer/reporter: Rob Gamble is a retired Elder in the Minnesota Annual Conference of the UMC, attends Hennepin Ave. UMC. He is an organizing officer of Faith Family Fairness Alliance which is creating a statewide interfaith coalition of GLBT-friendly faith groups in Minnesota. He is a member of Reconciling Ministries Clergy, Retired Reconciling Ministries Clergy Caucus of Minnesota, and Evangelicals Concerned – Twin Cities.

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RMN Convocation August 2-5, 2007 Invites Your Ideas

The Ninth National Reconciling Convocation will be held at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, August 2-5, 2007. The convocation "Faith, Hope, Love" anticipates over 700 participants with 100 young adults. Reconciling Ministries Network would like to include your ideas for workshops, leaders, entertainment, worship, and Bible study to celebrate, create, and empower the inclusive, prophetic church of Jesus Christ.

Call for convocation presentation/workshop proposals:

To expand the variety of dynamic experiences at convocation, RMN issues a call for presentation/workshop proposals. If you are, or someone you can recommend, is an experienced qualified workshop leader, please send a proposal summarizing both expertise and content focus.

Your ideas are welcome! Please send them to troy@rmnetwork.org.

Volunteer for General Conference 2008

It's not too early to start planning to volunteer to assist Affirmation during General Conference 2008. The conference will be held April 22 to May 8, 2008 in Fort Worth, TX.

One of the major activities of Affirmation during GC is the publication of a daily newsletter. For that we need editors, reporters, and distribution staff. We especially need one or two layout editors who are familiar with Microsoft Publisher. We also need office staff, those to help our coalition partners, caregivers, and hosts for gatherings.

Prayerfully consider your gifts and graces to see how you can serve in this vital witness.



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<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/UMCalledOut>